

VZCZCXRO8375
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHLB #1081 2011456
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201456Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8809
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1331
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001081

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: KARAMEH WILL NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN SECOND
GOVERNMENT, KEEN TO INITIATE USG CONTACTS

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
) .

SUMMARY

1. (C) A supporter of former PM Omar Karamah and Karamah's son Faisal told Poloff that Karamah, notwithstanding his rejection of the Siniora government, would not participate in a second government, discounting rumors that he would head such a government. The two stressed the elder Karamah's desire to exchange views with USG officials, despite political differences. They also discussed the challenges the Lebanese Armed Forces face in their efforts to root out Fatah al-Islam from Nahr Al-Barid, stressing that Islamic radicals in Tripoli are a danger to all moderates. End summary.

KARAMEH SENIOR OPEN TO DISCUSSION WITH U.S.

2. (C) On July 10 Poloff met with Tripoli businessman Khaldun Sharif, a supporter of former PM Omar Karamah, and the former PM's son Faisal Karamah, at their request. They apparently wanted to convey the elder Karamah's desire to clarify his position in, and to exchange views with us on, the current political situation. Sharif emphasized that Omar Karamah would not participate in a second government, although he considers the Siniora cabinet illegitimate and unconstitutional. Faisal added that the situation is heading towards confrontation and that as a party (his father's Arab Liberation Party), they will not "play the game of blood and civil war." The Karamah camp is keen to dialogue with USG officials, regardless of political differences. Sharif noted to Poloff that talking only to those who share "your agenda" (an unveiled reference to March 14), will make the problems worse.

LAF TASK IN NAHR AL-BARID COMPLICATED BY LOW FUNDING

3. (C) Karamah described the situation in Tripoli, a city close to the Nahr al-Bared fighting, as tense and difficult. The fighting is affecting the economy, although people have adapted. While it is unknown how Fatah al-Islam (FAI) is getting its supplies and munitions to NAB, he speculated that there is a network of tunnels. Sharif indicated that FAI elements are often "embraced" (sheltered) by ordinary citizens. Both Sharif and Karamah expressed complete support for the LAF in its fight against FAI, but argued that, given its weak intelligence, it should have used a different tactic

to root out the militants.

¶4. (C) Sharif lamented the fact that the LAF annual intelligence budget is about USD two million compared to USD 60 million for the Internal Security Forces intelligence services, adding that the LAF is the only institution that still unites the Lebanese, and that LAF Commander General Michel Sleiman could be the best candidate for president. Both regarded Islamic radicals, particularly foreign ones, as a danger to all moderates, noting that Pakistani religious scholars are very active in parts of northern Lebanon, especially in the poor neighborhood of Abu Samra.

LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR PARIS TALKS

¶5. (C) Commenting on the July 14 - 17 Saint-Cloud talks, which were about to start at the time of the conversation, Faisal said that former Hizballah minister Mohamed Fneish, with his moderate, clean reputation, was a good choice to head the Hizballah delegation.

FELTMAN